

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

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S/S-O:DMACK

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, LE, US

SUBJECT: NOVEMBER 3 DEPARTMENTAL PRESS BRIEFING

1. FOLLOWING FOR YOUR INFO ARE PERTINENT EXCERPTS OF
NOVEMBER 3 DEPARTMENTAL PRESS BRIEFING RELATING TO SITUATION
IN LEBANON.

Q. BOB, CAN YOU CONFIRM REPORTS THAT THE LEBANESE
GOVERNMENT HAS CONSULTED WITH THE UNITED STATES ABOUT
POSSIBLE INTERVENTION?

A. I CANNOT CONFIRM ANY SUCH REPORTS AT ALL, NO. AS FAR
AS I KNOW, ON THIS SUBJECT, OUR POSITION IS EXACTLY THE
SAME AS IT WAS.

Q. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT ASKED FOR ANY HELP?

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A. AS FAR AS INTERVENTION GOES?

Q. WITH RESPECT TO RESOLVING THE CRISIS?

A. WELL, THE ONLY THING THAT I AM AWARE OF IS THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT CAME TO US LAST FRIDAY--I THINK IT WAS

--AND ASKED AMBASSADOR GODLEY IF WE COULD PROVIDE SOME HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. WE ARE IN THE PROCESS RIGHT NOW OF ARRANGING TO SHIP 500,000 DOLLARS WORTH OF DISASTER RELIEF MATERIAL--DRUGS, MEDICINES, ETC.--TO GET TO LEBANON BY AIR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. A LITTLE MORE THAN EIGHT TONS OF SUCH SUPPLIES ARE READY FOR SHIPMENT UP AT JFK AIRPORT. THEY WERE READY YESTERDAY, AND I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY ARE GOING TO BE FLOWN TO BEIRUT FROM NEW YORK BY TRANS-MEDITERRANEAN AIRLINES, WHICH IS AN INTERNATIONAL CARGO CARRIER WHICH IS BASED IN LEBANON. THEIR OFFICE OVER HERE IS AT JFK IN NEW YORK.

THIS WILL BE CONSIGNED TO THE HOSPITAL OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT FOR DISTRIBUTION TO OTHER HOSPITALS AND CLINICS IN LEBANON.

NOW, BERNIE, YOU ASKED ME A QUESTION.

Q. WHO OWNS THAT AIRLINE, BOB? CAN YOU GIVE US A LINE OR TWO ON THAT AIRLINE, PLEASE?

A. I'LL HAVE TO GET IT; I DON'T HAVE IT HERE. THE ONLY ADDITIONAL THING I HAVE: THERE WAS A PILOT, YOU REMEMBER, NAMED HUDDLESTON. HE'S AN EMPLOYEE OF TRANS-MEDITERRANEAN AIRLINES, AND HE WAS ABDUCTED THURSDAY OR FRIDAY. HE HAS BEEN RELEASED, AND IT WAS THE AIRLINE THAT WAS VERY INSTRUMENTAL IN EFFECTING HIS RELEASE, AND HE'S ALIVE, SAFE, AND WELL, AND THAT ONE HAS BEEN SOLVED.

Q. WHAT KIND OF RELIEF SUPPLIES ARE INVOLVED HERE?

A. I THINK IT'S PRIMARILY DRUGS AND MEDICINES FOR HOSPITALS. NOW, I'VE GOT IN MY GUIDANCE HERE, "AND UNCLASSIFIED

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OTHER DISASTER RELIEF MEDICAL SUPPLIES." I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANY KIND OF A MEDICAL BREAKDOWN HERE, BUT IT'S ALL IN THE MEDICAL AREA.

Q. BOB, ARE THOSE EIGHT TONS A FIRST INSTALLMENT WITH MORE TO COME OR WHAT?

A. I CAN'T TELL YOU WHETHER THIS WILL JUST BE A FIRST

INSTALLMENT. I THINK IT WILL DEPEND ON THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT'S ESTIMATE OF THEIR FUTURE REQUIREMENTS. AND OBVIOUSLY IF THEY HAVE A NEED FOR MORE THAN THIS WE OBVIOUSLY WILL LOOK AT IT VERY SYMPATHETICALLY.

NOW, IN ADDITION, OF COURSE, THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT IS

GOING TO THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS, AMERICAN RED CROSS, ETC. SO I THINK ONE WOULD HAVE TO MAKE THIS JUDGMENT ON THE GROUND.

Q. BUT THESE EIGHT TONS REPRESENT THE HALF MILLION DOLLARS?

A. THAT'S RIGHT. THAT'S FROM OUR AID DISASTER RELIEF CONTINGENCY FUND. BUT THERE MAY BE ADDITIONAL THINGS GOING FROM THE RED CROSS, FOR EXAMPLE.

Q. BOB, IS THE DISASTER RELIEF GOING TO BE MADE

AVAILABLE TO BOTH THE RIGHT WING AND THE MOSLEM LEFTISTS? BOTH SIDES HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO THAT?

A. AS I SAID WITH REGARD TO THESE EIGHT TONS THAT ARE GOING OUT, IT'S GOING TO GO TO THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT-- NOT THE VARIOUS FACTIONS. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT REQUESTED THE HELP. IT'S GOING TO THE HOSPITAL OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT, WHICH WILL, PRESUMABLY-- I DON'T KNOW, BUT PRESUMABLY--IN CONSULTATION WITH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT--I ASSUME THERE ARE GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS, GOVERNMENT CLINICS--THEY WILL WORK TOGETHER TO DISTRIBUTE THESE EIGHT TONS OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE WHERE IT'S NEEDED. I'M NOT SURE
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IT'S A QUESTION OF DELIVERING IT TO ONE FACTION OR ANOTHER FACTION. THIS IS STRICTLY MEDICAL, AND THEY WANT TO GET IT INTO THE HANDS OF THE RIGHT PEOPLE.

Q. IS THAT A GRANT?

A. I AM VIRTUALLY POSITIVE IT'S A GRANT. THE DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS ARE NOT ON LOAN AS FAR AS I KNOW. IT'S NOT MADE ON A LOAN BASIS.

Q. THE UNITED NATIONS IS NOT INVOLVED IN THIS PARTICULAR DISASTER RELIEF OPERATION?

A. NO, THIS IS FROM OUR AID DISASTER RELIEF OFFICE.

Q. IT'S STRICTLY BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT?

A. YES, SIR.

Q. DO YOU KNOW THE VALUE, HOW MUCH OF THE 500,000 DOLLARS THE EIGHT TONS REPRESENTS; OR IS THAT ALL OF IT?

A. I THINK THAT'S ALL OF IT. AS FAR AS I KNOW, YES.

Q. BOB, YOU'RE SAYING THOUGH THAT THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT REQUESTED ANY OTHER KIND OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE?

A. I AM UNAWARE OF ANY OTHER KIND OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE; FOR EXAMPLE, SUCH AS THE QUESTION THAT DICK RAISED WITH ME IN THE BEGINNING.

Q. YOU ARE UNAWARE OF IT, BUT COULD YOU SAY CATEGORICALLY THAT IT HASN'T BEEN ASKED FOR?

A. I WILL BE GLAD TO CHECK INTO IT AND IF I AM WRONG, I WILL GET BACK TO YOU. BUT I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE SITUATION HAS NOT CHANGED SINCE LAST FRIDAY--BUT I MAY BE WRONG.

Q. HOW ABOUT THE TWO USIA MEN? IS THERE ANYTHING UNCLASSIFIED

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FURTHER ON THEM?

A. AMBASSADOR GODLEY, PERSONALLY, CONTINUES TO BE IN VERY CLOSE TOUCH WITH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WITH REGARD TO THESE TWO GENTLEMEN. BUT AS OF TODAY, I JUST CANNOT GIVE YOU ANYTHING SPECIFIC ON IT. BUT HE IS PERSONALLY--WITHIN THE LAST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, FOR EXAMPLE--HE HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND HE WILL CONTINUE TO BE WORKING ON THIS.

Q. AND THERE IS STILL NO IDEA AS TO WHICH FACTION KIDNAPPED THE MEN? WHETHER THEY ARE ALIVE? WE KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THEM, IN OTHER WORDS?

A. NO.

WE HAVE HAD UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT THEY ARE ALIVE, BUT I CANNOT--WE HAVE NO CONFIRMED REPORTS ON THE SPECIFIC GROUP THAT MAY BE HOLDING THESE TWO GENTLEMEN. BUT I JUST HATE TO GET INTO SPECIFICS HERE AT THIS TIME. IT IS A VERY DELICATE TIME, HERE, AND WE ARE HOPEFUL, OBVIOUSLY, THAT THESE TWO GENTLEMEN WILL BE RELEASED.

Q. HAS THERE BEEN ANY DEMAND FOR RANSOM?

A. I SAID FIVE OR SIX DAYS AGO THAT I WAS UNAWARE OF ANY;
AND I HAVE CHECKED INTO THIS AND I CAN SAY THAT AS OF
TODAY WE ARE UNAWARE OF ANY SUCH DEMAND.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON THE NUMBER OF
AMERICANS STILL LEFT IN LEBANON?

A. YES, I'M SORRY. I SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THAT.

OVER THE WEEKEND, AS WE ALL KNOW, AMBASSADOR GODLEY
ORDERED THE DEPARTURE OF THE REMAINING OFFICIAL AMERICAN
DEPENDENTS AND LESS ESSENTIAL EMBASSY STAFF.

AND AS OF YESTERDAY, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF OFFICIAL
AMERICANS REMAINING IN LEBANON WAS 196--OF WHICH 48 WERE
DEPENDENTS.

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DEPARTURES ARE CONTINUING, AND MAC GODLEY TELLS US THAT
ALL OFFICIAL DEPENDENTS SHOULD BE OUT OF THE COUNTRY BY
MIDWEEK OF THIS WEEK.

THE DEPARTURE OF SOME OF THE LESS ESSENTIAL STAFF PER-
SONNEL MAY TAKE A LITTLE BIT LONGER.

WITH REGARD TO DEPARTURES, THERE IS STILL ADEQUATE,
FULLY ADEQUATE, COMMERCIAL SERVICE THAT IS GOING OUT OF
BEIRUT. THE AIRPORT IS OPEN. THERE IS NO PROBLEM ON
THAT FRONT, AS OF THE LAST TIME I CHECKED INTO THIS.

WITH REGARD TO THE NONOFFICIAL AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN
LEBANON, BEGINNING LAST SATURDAY, THE AMBASSADOR HAS BEEN
ADVISING THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY THAT THEY SHOULD CONSIDER
EVACUATING THEIR DEPENDENTS AND LESS ESSENTIAL EMPLOYEES
FROM BEIRUT.

IN OUR LAST ESTIMATE--WHICH IS PROBABLY ABOUT 36 HOURS
OLD NOW, AT LEAST, I WOULD SAY--OF THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE
AMERICANS REMAINING IN LEBANON AND WHO MIGHT WISH TO
DEPART, IS ABOUT 500.

NOW AS YOU RECALL, WE HAVE THE 1,500 FIGURE THAT I GAVE
YOU A COUPLE OF TIMES LAST WEEK, WHICH CONSISTS OF DUAL

NATIONALS PLUS THOSE AMERICANS IN LEBANON WHO DO NOT WISH
TO DEPART. SO THAT AS OF NOW YOU CAN SAY THERE ARE

ROUGHLY A COUPLE OF THOUSAND PRIVATE AMERICANS THERE.

BUT DEPARTURES WERE CONTINUING OVER THE WEEKEND.

ALL THE AMERICANS THAT ARE THERE CONTINUE TO REMAIN
SAFE. WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF ANY SERIOUS OR OTHER

INJURY THAT I AM AWARE OF--OTHER THAN THE "CHICAGO
TRIBUNE" REPORTER, MR. CAPUTO, THAT WE TOLD YOU ABOUT
A WEEK AGO. HE IS NOW SAFE AND IN GOOD HANDS AND IS
RECOVERING, I AM TOLD.

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SO THAT IS ABOUT ALL I CAN--

Q. WHAT HAPPENED?

A. HE GOT SHOT IN THE FEET AND HAD TO RUN AROUND THE
CORNER; AND GOT INTO A LEBANESE HOSPITAL AND WE GOT HIM
OUT OF THERE AND HE IS IN GOOD HANDS NOW.

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